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James C. Armstrong, *Editor*

AFRICAN LANGUAGES

A genetic and decimalised classification for bibliographic and general reference

Derek Fivaz
Patricia E. Scott

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African

To our friend
and esteemed predecessor
in the compilation
of a classification scheme
for African languages
for bibliographic purposes

C. M. DOKE

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PREFACE

This work was born of a simple need. The tool to meet that need has turned out to be both complex and very demanding in its shaping. Our problem was that of accomodating within our own University Library classification scheme works in the ever widening field of African languages. The nature of this problem can perhaps best be appreciated by those who are committed to one or other of the several inadequate classification schemes devised for this purpose.

The demands of this present work have been far in excess of what we at first expected. The user can himself gauge the nature and the extent of the work required, and draw his own conclusions about our committing so much effort to a field like African language classification in its present state. However, no work is an end in itself, and if this tool leads ultimately to the production of yet better tools it will have served both short and long-term needs.

The potential usefulness of the volume has appeared to broaden as the work progressed, and we anticipate that it will be useful to a range of users quite removed from the needs of library classification. We are reasonably assured that this work gathers in one place information culled from a wide spread of published authoritative sources, information which is nowhere else assembled in quite this way. The task of interpreting and of reconciling inexplicit or competing views of language relationships has been at times frustrating. It will be quite evident that knowledge of language names, data, and relationships in some parts of Africa is abysmally small.

As compilers of this work we have brought in the one case a professional linguist's interest, although not specialisation, in the field of African language classification; in the other a professional qualification in Librarianship, as well as a particular interest in the problems of African language classification, continuing, as the great grand-daughter of Wilhelm Heinrich Immanuel Bleek, a third generation of family involvement in the classification of African languages.

We would be grateful to receive information concerning misinterpretation of our sources, details of sources omitted, and of course to receive information on language names or relationships not reflected in published sources to date. The latter will be accumulated and most gladly passed on to the compiler of the next similar volume to this!

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